

An Analysis of the Impacts of 9/11 on Pashto Short Stories in Southern Pashtoonkhwa:

By

¹Naseer Ahmed Nangial, ²Dr. Javed Iqbal

Abstract:

The scholars in this dissertation have intellectually strived to evaluate the effects of post 9/11 incident on Pashto short stories transcribed in Southern Pashtoonkhwa (the title attributed to Pashtoon belt falling into Balochistan province) literature. The perplexing 9/11 episode has not only foreshadowed a new turning point in global affairs at an unanticipated way, but it has also dramatically transformed the literature of dwellers – residing at the Pak-Afghan porous borders. The precedents of the war hysteria and assaults on Afghanistan by the world powers – following the 9/11 attacks in America – to chastise the later for offering sanctuary to the architect of the confounding manoeuvres. This can easily perceive in the form of characters and particularly in short stories of the region. The researchers have categorized scores of short stories written specifically in the post- 9/11, which contained copious instances of the incident.

Keywords: Pashto, 9/11, Analysis, Short Stories, Pashtoonkhwa etc.

Introduction:

The 9/11 has turned a historic day not only for the US, but also for the entire world. This tragic incident gave rise to a new terminology, "nine-eleven". On September 11, four passenger aircrafts took off from different airports of US. These aircrafts were planned to attack different targets. Two of them hit the biggest skyscrapers of that time, "World Trade Centre", which were centers of international trade, and razed the two to ground in seconds. The other two aircrafts – destined to attack the sensitive places of 'White House' and 'Pentagon' – were soon immediately located and grounded by the US Air Force. Although, these horrific incidents prompted a long chain of historical events, it indispensably affected US and rest of the world alike.

¹M.Phil. scholar, Department of Pashto, University of Balochistan, Quetta Pakistan

²Assistant Professor, Department of Pashto, University of Balochistan, Quetta Pakistan

For the sake of research, the world is apportioned into two, as;

- a) World before Nine eleven
- b) World after Nine eleven

The Influence of 9/11:

The impact of this apocalypse was prominent in US, especially Afghanistan and Pakhtunkhwa for the reason that the leader of the organization that claimed responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, Usama bin Laden, a Saudi citizen, was in Afghanistan.

The US asked for help against war on terror. The world and Pakistan responded to US call with positive nod. The US entered Afghanistan and a long war began.

Afghanistan was still under flames of the preceding Russian war, when new war began & this time the war was not confined to Afghanistan but the adjoining Pakhtunkhwa came under its sway. Thousands were martyred and similar number wounded. It left indelible marks on the agriculture, trade, industry and socio-economic agency of Afghanistan and Pakhtunkhwa. Quite similarly, this tragedy affected Pashtun literature, Pashto writings, poetry, poems, drama & novels.

This gave a strong incentive to the Pashtun writers to classify and write upon the war and militancy-racked region. The literature that once was abound with the glory of sword, the might of Pashtun warriors and gallantry anecdotes of Pakhtunkhwa now pens down the hapless, oppressed milieu & is now predisposed towards books and technology and also gave rise to new terminologies.

The Impact of the Incident of 9/11 on the Pashto Short Stories of Southern Pakhtunkhwa:

As the long war and militancy across Pakhtunkhwa pre and post 9/11, affected poetry, poems, songs and other literary genres, quite similar repercussions can be witnessed in Pashto short stories. Pashto short stories are not spared in this regard.

Although, many short stories have been written in this regard but as an illustration, we will discuss few short stories of the writers of Southern Pakhtunkhwa.

The collection of short stories of Professor Nazar Panizai's "Da Azadai Kanrhai" or "Freedom's stone" has been one such published by Skam Academy Quetta printed by United Press Quetta.

While all the short stories in this collection revolve around the Pashtuns' milieu, and depicts Pashtuns' impotence, illiteracy and divested lifestyle, but we will choose short stories that display more influence of 9/11.

1-Professor Nazar Panizai's Short Stories, (Da Azadai Kaanrhai) Freedom's Stone:

In this collection, the short story that is very much relevant to our subject is titled as "The Dinosaur". In this short story, Nazar Panizai refers to the world's great powers as 'Dinosaurs'. The short story begins as the author travels with his friend Aimal Khan and Aimal's 12-year-old son in Aimal's Jeep.

They began to toil up and as they reach the forest, they witness fallen trees, incinerated grass & burnt Foxes, Monkeys, Elephants, Bulls, a lion and other dead animals laying around. Blood and stink prompt Aimal and he asks as what has happened to them? How and who has killed them?

He answers, Dinosaur, and tells him that he would rest of the story once they get home back. Then they hunt a Deer and a Bighorn ram. When they return home, Atal Khan reminds his father to tell him the story of 'Giant Monster'. Aimal, out of surprise, asks, which monster? Atal reminds him the Dinosaur that had caused bloodshed and havoc in the Jungle. In this short story, Pashtuns are being resembled with Aunts. Would that Pashtuns could demonstrate the unity, organisation, strength and discipline of Aunts. The story further tells that when all the animals were repeatedly annoyed by the Dinosaurs, they called all animals for consultation. When the intense rumination concluded no result, the aunts called for their own assembly.

"The ants echoed that we will be the victims of this monster and we are in great jeopardy chiefly because we lie in the paths, we neither hurt anyone nor are we make obstacles in someone's way. During their hostility and rampage, we get killed underneath their feet. After an extensive contemplation and debate, a conclusion was reached. The ants decided to bite the vein of the nape of Dinosaurs, whenever they are set to eat their prey. This would drive them crazy, eventually killing each other and thus we would get rid of them" (Panizai)

The writer has exquisitely depicted the atrocities of the US and other powerful states. Would that Pashtuns gather and form strategies to cope with cunning enemies and set way forward to cut the jugular vein of the enemy. Until then, we would be rammed by the mighty foes. The writer further writes: "These diligent and conscientious ants would assemble and would lay out plan to eliminate the Dinosaurs." (Ibid)

Here the writer stresses the point the weak and feeble should unite to resist aggressor. In the end the writer also discusses the 'black rain' and regards it as an identity of Dinosaurs. In the "Azadai Kaanrhi", Professor Nazar Panizai also underlines the causes and roots of the destruction of Pakhtunkhwa. In another short story, "Vainay", where the author points to

the white colour of the termites and wants to set them on fire but his mother stops him from doing so and instead advises to refrain and warns him of the wrath and curse. The writer becomes curious and starts thinking as if every white thing is innocuous? Is Milk safe? Is an ewe perilous and so on? Referring to Mullahs' white turban & white clothes, the Prof. Nazar Panzai writes,

"Dr. Sahib these termites are ferocious. They live in our homes and roam freely in the streets of our countryside, are soft and gentle people still deem them as innocent and harmless. People respect them hitherto. They are scared of their wrath and curse. They need their prayers however these termites are black, they are opposed to development, and they are against prosperity and progress of the people. They have destroyed families, homes and villages, treat them and not me. I'm ok" (Ibid).

In this short story, a Pashtun, who has turned mad visits neurologist who admit him in the ward of mentally disabled patients. The writer wants to extend the explicit message that termites have been the key factor in oppressing and enervating Pashtuns. This needs to be treated as it halts the progress & development of society.

This short story encompasses the role of religious scholars, Mullahs, in propagating Jihad pre and post 9/11. In this collection, Professor Nazar Panizai has beautifully characterised Pashtunwali, brother-hood, love, unity, class struggle, Pashtuns destruction, illiteracy and how Pashtuns have been oppressed and exploited in their own resource-rich motherland.

2. Farooq Sarwar's Short Stories:

Another writer, artist, actor and literary figure published his collection of short stories "Zanzeeruna" (chains) in 2015. Although, this collection covers various aspects of human and Pashtun's society and lifestyle that exist here, still it discusses the subject of our topic. When the tragedy of 9/11 exacerbated peace in Pakhtunkhwa, causing chaos with an undefined enemy, this conundrum swept away many tribal chieftains eventually gaining toehold in southern Pakhtunkhwa in the form of Shia-Sunni strife. On this subject Farooq Sarwar writes a short story "Nawalad" (unknown) and commences it as;

"Overwhelmed with fear and hastiness as the shadow pursues me, as I try to hide in streets". (Farooq)

Farooq Sarwar portrays his city's condition.

"I dwell in a city whose inhabitants are completely dominated by anxiety and horror, and have put themselves in cage like birds. Thus, panic prevails in the streets that one used to be echoed with tee-hee and chuckles". (Ibid)

This short story conveys a very deep message. Farooq Sarwar's another collection was published by Ghaznavi Publishers in 2017 by the name "Mujrim" (convict). As usual it contains the essence of past, its prefaces have been written by Syed Khair Muhammad Arif, Dr. Javed Iqbal and Prof. Aseer Mangal.

"It is really commendable task the way short story writer depicts the miseries of his nation and gifts his people exemplary stories like 'Daamuna', 'Lewanayi', 'Wuna', 'Bangri', and 'Mujrim'. (Ibid)

Gergai Gezhaka:

It is another short story collection of Farooq Sarwar that was published back in 2006 by Skam Adabi Academy Quetta.

The dedication of this is very much relevant with our topic. Here the word "Narhand" stands for any impossible thing or commodity that is hard to gain. US is referred to as Uncle Sam that has beheaded the farthest dreamt peace.

In this collection contains following short stories Gargai Gezhaka, Zmarai, Zharha Gedarha, Thor Perai, Boi, Anzur and Thor Ranguna. Its preface has been written by Saeed Gohar, Aseer Mangal and Sohail Jaffar. Saeed Gohar further writes about the author: In my viewpoint, his observation of the Pashtun society, his apparent expression, flushing out US's hoggish posture in this global village is laudable.

Analysis:

As is known about Farooq Sarwar's predisposition, Saeed Gohar appreciates his portrayal of Pashtun society and pointing out the imperialist role of US, which validates the fact that the incident of 9/11 has deeply affected Pashto literature.

Aseer Mangal in his remarks writes,

“The notorious game that has been underway in Afghanistan since last three decades shocked the world, especially the way the 9/11 jolted the world is yet another episode to write upon” (Ibid)

Farooq Sarwar had very excellently elucidated the condition of Pashtuns' environment and has asserted that Pashtuns are oppressed people and are in no way terrorists, fundamentalists but are actually victims of these two. Farooq Sarwar has not only aired the grievances of Pashtuns but has also surfaced the miseries of poverty-stricken, unemployed and the agony of labour class. In "Girgai Gizhaka", Farooq Sarwar narrates the story of an Afghan boy, who migrates to Europe to flee from the militancy-racked and poverty-stricken Afghanistan. As he arrives in Europe, he starts working in an Afghan owned shop but stays with an Arab roommate. One day when the Arab is held in custody on the charges of complicity in Israel

bombing. As the Italian police later persecute that Arab guy, the Afghan finds himself in deep water.

"The local police treat me very harshly. They call me to police station and interrogate me for hours and sometimes even place me in detention for night. Only I know the pain inflicted on me. They accuse me of complicity in terrorism but have not proved their charges thus far."(Ibid)

Farooq Sarwar's short story endorses our opinion that Pashtuns (diaspora) that work abroad are living in worst condition. He then phones his sister, Nafeesa, who still resides in Kabul. Nafeesa tells him about the prevalent fear and terror and that situation Kabul has unchanged.

"Sister said that fighter jet came and dropped bombs. Children of our relatives were killed but fortunately my mom and younger brothers remained unscathed" (Ibid)

Nafeesa then tells her brother that Mom misses you too much and wants to be back. But he's very worried as how can he return to his country in this volatile environment and he sees a bird "Girgayi Gezhaka" that awakens him each morning. Here the writer portrays the bird as resilient animal that never abandons its home no matter how harsh the conditions may be.

The writer discusses it in the perspective of "Afghan War" when Afghanistan was ruled by "Khalq Party" and the US along with all the neighbours of Afghanistan initiated an undeclared war & welcomed the immigrants and were told that it's forbidden to live under communist rule. But even that time Pashtun literary figures, writers, poets and Afghan President Dr Najeeb Ullah urged the people not to leave their motherland as they would not find its substitute. Abandoning homeland and becoming an immigrant, Farooq Sarwar writes:

"O! Beautiful bird, Papa was right that everything escapes the freezing cold and unbearable heat wave, but you put up with every sort of condition and never shun your nest. You're more powerful than me." (Ibid)

Farooq Sarwar in this short story wants to substantiate that how hard the situation may get, homeland shall never be abandoned. This is the time to fend off enemies and not to escape or give up. But sometimes you may take a step backward in order to advance two steps ahead. If Dr Najeeb had left Afghanistan for quite some time, he would have been back to play more prolific role in Afghanistan's future but he was destined to die and he died. Farooq Sarwar's 'Girgai Gezhaka' still hopes for peace in the motherland. The bird implores the war mongers not to ruin them any further, we are suffocating owing to the stink of bomb and ammunition, eye itches, heart beats and ear drums are being pierced, so I cannot hear my own tweet, can't even hear Qamar Gula's choir,

“Za spina kawtara yam uchath parwazuna kawam,
Garzam dunya walu ta da soli awazuna kawam.”
(www.google.pashtosongs.qamargulaghazals)

"Blessed with high flight, I'm white pigeon,

Echoing the message of peace to the region,"

For God sake, for the sake of those panicked children, widows and orphaned please listen to our cry. You know the truth and you can make distinction between the right and wrong, then why do you turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to our agony?

Zmarai:

This collection has pictured the Russian intervention and later withdrawal from Afghanistan and the way private militias were established in different parts of the country.

Zharha Gedarha:

This is another short story that very covers the minute yet vast repercussions. It envisages the general mores that when we are confronted by weak nemesis, we act as group to deter that aggression but as soon as the enemy vanishes, we tend to revive our old internal strife and start pulling each other leg.

Thor Payrai:

It is one such short story that supports our subject i.e.: The Impact of 9/11 on Pashto short stories. The story entails a character named Kabeer who is in constant fight with the "thor payrai" or black devil. Kabeer assists all those people who have suffered in the war against the Devil. He shelters, sponsors & even nurse the wounded people. He shares his meal with the people who have lost homes in the war against the Devil. He partakes of all the resources at his disposal. Similarly, enthusiasm was seen during the FATA IDPs, when people in different parts of Pakhtunkhwa housed the IDPs in their homes, looked after their children as their own and made them part of their families.

This proves that Pashtuns still believe in commonwealth and partnership. Even to this day, we can get to see joint families whose great grandfathers were cousins.

3- Dr Naseeb Ullah Seemab Short Stories (Manjaarai):

Manjaarai is the second short story from the collection of Prof. Dr. Naseebullah Seemab and was published in 2010. In his collection of short stories' some of them are "Khor Shaadi", "Manjaarai", "Be-numa Musafir", "Tasha ghozi", "Bewasi", "Da peryai lakarha" and "Lwazha".

All tales worth discussing and worth appreciation, every story has acceptable command for society, but that one short story Be-numa Musafir

(unknown passenger) is relevant with our subject, i.e. that 9/11 has affected our culture, norms, and traditions.

A contemporary Pashtun, who once would allow an unknown person to have him as guest, who would stay for a night at his quarter, would partake his children's bread and gave much regard to his visitor, has now totally changed after 9/11.

In the same short story, the writer explains the tale of another traveller that offers prayer in town let mosque. The townsmen authorize him to stay for a night at their home. The next morning, the townsmen were shocked when they did not find the guest. They looked for his whereabouts but the outsider wasn't found. This way the gullible Pashtuns were buffaloes several times.

4 - Rehmat Dewan Short Stories:

Rehmat Dewan also wrote short stories. In his collection of short stories, one is named as "Khizmat" which was published in 2017.

In this short story, he describes that the Pashtun society will not witness felicity, unless the philosophy of Bacha Khan and Khan Shaheed is adhered to. Every short story of writer enmeshes the grief of his people and it added a new chapter to the Pashto literature post 9/11.

In Dewan's collection of short story, one of his smallish story named as "Jung" in which he drafted as such,

"I was surfing Facebook's timeline and seeing friends' posts, I saw a little innocent girl's video, I waited to watch that video.' A man asks from a girl, where your father is.

Girl replied 'He died'.

A person asked again where did he die?

'In a battle' girl answered"

I was sagging; I stick hands on my eyes to clean up the tears.

I did not know why

I watched that video,

Daddy is died

Where?

In the battle.

Two oceanic tears fell off my daughter's eyes. (Jang Pashto)

Conclusion:

9/11 has brought a prominent impact on the literature of Pashto language, especially on novel and short-stories and it can be reflected in many ways. And here I refer some of the short-stories written by different writers from the Southern Pakhtunkhwa. The afore-mentioned writings clearly narrate the impact of 9/11 on the lives and livelihood of Pashtuns as well as Pashto literature on short stories. And the research reveals the fact that

9/11 has brought clear impact on Pakhtunkhwa motherland, its masses and the intelligentsia.

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